

Pacific Nor'West

Boating

Adventuring Afloat in the Pacific Northwest



BOAT REVIEW
**ASPEN POWER
CATAMARAN C90**

We Take a Ride on a
Very Stormy Day

DESTINATION
**WINTER WEEKEND
CRUISING**

The Season is Always
On in the PNW

MARITIME MEANDERINGS
**PUGET SOUND
NAVY MUSEUM**

AND THEN ONE DAY, LARRY GRAF REINVENTED THE BOAT

ASPEN POWER CATAMARAN C90



BY CHUCK GOULD | PHOTOS BY C-IMAGES.NET

(Editor's note: This article is a reprint of an item previously published.)



MAIN CABIN IS PLEASANT AND INVITING.

It was a miserable day for a boat ride. A dark grey Elliott Bay intemperately heaved and frothed. The wind rose as fast as the rain receded, and a customary playground for recreational boaters assumed an ominous and foreboding countenance. The moans and wails of cold winds (screaming through shrouds as taut as the strings of a Steinway), sang a dull monotonous dirge of dread and danger. Owners of some of the largest and heaviest yachts in the harbor surveyed the maelstrom and canceled plans to leave the dock. Yes, it was surely a miserable day for a boat ride, but a fabulous day for a sea trial!

Larry Graf is properly considered one of the leading boat designers in the Pacific Northwest, and one could make a compelling case that he ranks among the most innovative on the planet. Larry is constantly adjusting, fine tuning, redesigning, and returning to the drawing board to refine his boats, never content to rest upon more success and acclaim than most people will ever achieve. “Almost perfect” has never been good enough for Larry, and power catamarans have advanced substantially due to his influence.

Larry has never been afraid to design outside the box. However, one day when Larry was contemplating design improvements, upgrades, and refinements something rather unusual and remarkable, (even by Larry Graf standards) occurred; he reinvented the boat. Larry founded a new company to develop and market his idea; Aspen Power Catamarans.

The 28' Aspen C90 Power Catamaran is radically different from what we traditionally understand a catamaran to be. Many catamaran designers really build a pair of matching mono-hulls, and join them together with a common deck. While the assumption may not be entirely and technically accurate, it's easy to develop the impression that either hull of a standard catamaran could operate as an independent entity. Power catamarans traditionally have two engines, one for each “ama” or hull. Aspen Power Catamarans take a different approach.

As Larry Graf explained, “We’re technically building a modified power proa. The port and starboard hulls are entirely different. The starboard hull displaces 35% more

than the port hull, and carries 35% more of the load. It's a concept that might be easy to imagine by visualizing some of the 'outrigger' boats used by native islanders in the Pacific. We use only one engine, rather than the twins expected on a power catamaran. The inboard engine is on the starboard side. Running on one engine rather than two improves range and fuel economy substantially, and reduces maintenance costs as well. The bows of each hull are curved just slightly like an airplane wing, only tipped up. This creates a directional lifting force to starboard and exactly balances the thrust to port that we naturally experience with a single engine on the starboard side."

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Larry gave us a tour before leaving the dock. We were pleased with virtually everything we saw, and no less than astonished by a couple of bold and innovative ideas.

Viewed from directly abeam, the Aspen C90 appears to be a smartly styled sedan cruiser, adroitly incorporating the usually successful formula of traditional hull and superstructure proportions enhanced with some carefully applied contemporary styling cues. It's an attractive boat by almost any standard.

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MATCHING HELM AND STARBOARD WATCH SEATS, WITH EASY ACCESS TO LOWER DECK IN STARBOARD FOREQUARTER OF MAIN CABIN.

NEAT, CONCISE, INSTALLATION OF FULLY INTEGRATED ELECTRONICS.



Larry Graf has taken a “green” approach to the construction and design of the C90. One of the first things he mentioned was, “By eliminating the second engine we reduce the boats weight and subsequent structure weights, the overall affect throughout the boat significantly reduces the release of fumes and other pollutants during the construction process.”

Larry directed our attention to the cabin top, much of which was covered by an array of solar panels. “There’s no need for a generator on this boat,” remarked Larry. “With a propane galley stove, inverter, and diesel heat, the solar panels will prove capable of recharging the batteries while at the dock or at anchor as fast or faster than the boat would draw the batteries down.”

Combining the solar power and the “green” manufacturing process with the obvious energy savings and efficiency facilitated by a single engine application, we struggle to think of a more environmentally friendly power boat available anywhere else.

The cockpit is large enough for easy access to the main

cabin. Some casual fishing is possible as well. Ample space is available for a couple of folding chairs and perhaps a small portable table on which to enjoy a sunset refreshment while swinging lazily at anchor in a secluded island cove. Three adult men stood in the cockpit and still enjoyed plenty of “elbow room,” but boaters placing the highest possible priority on a huge cockpit would likely make a choice other than the Aspen Power Catamaran C90.

We discovered stowage absolutely everywhere in the cockpit area. Access to the 150-HP Cummins common rail diesel engine is through a hatch on the starboard side. (A transom panel is easily moved to improve service access, and there is also a hatch in main cabin ideally located for servicing the forward portion of the engine). The propane locker is in the transom. The port hull—with no engine—is available to stow lines, fenders, folding crab pots, dinghy motors, barbecues, and other essential but sometimes awkwardly stowed deck items.

We quickly noticed the use of unique windows in the

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GALLEY IS COMPACT BUT FULLY EQUIPPED, WITH A REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER LOCATED BELOW THE HELM SEAT

ASPEN C90 CRUISER PRICING

BUILT WITH PRIDE IN THE USA

C90 with Standard Equipment – 28'9 Meters \$197,800.00

STANDARD EQUIPMENT:

ENGINE – ELECTRICAL – HULL

- Bow & Stern Thruster w/Joy Stick Control, Side Power
- Volvo D3 150 w/Electronic Throttles & Shift
- Engine Comes w/Fresh Water Cooling, Oil Changer, Hot Water Tap
- 20 Amp Battery Charger House, +8 Amp Start, Pro Mariner
- 6 Gallon Hot Water Heater 110v/Engine Tie in Loop
- 120 V Panel/Battery, w/Breakers, Amp & Volt Meters, Blue Sea
- 2 Wipers -w/28" Blades
- Premium Vinyl Ester/Iso Composites
- ISO NPG Gel Coat (premium)
- Anchor Roller w/Locker with Bitter End
- Swim Platform w/3 step ladder w/SS Supports 8'x28"
- Cobalt Blue Hull
- Tinned Marine Grade Wire Harness, 100% Fuse Breaker Protection
- Stainless Rails Bow & Hard Top, Welded
- CO Sensor, Smoke Detector
- House Battery, 2 ea G27, Start Battery G27
- 1–2,000 GPH Engine Room Emergency Pump w/Alarm
- 400 Watt 120V-12V Inverter
- 2 Panel 160W Solar Charging System w/Controller
- Acme Contoured Bronze Prop, Precision Balanced
- 50 Gallon Water Tank (one 26g, one 24g)
- Full Keel Protection w/SS Sand Bar
- 12V Panel/Battery Switch, w/Breakers, Amp & Volt Meters, Blue Sea
- Kevlar Reinforced Bows
- Lenco SS Trim Tabs (16" extra wide) w/Lighted Position Controller
- 150 Amp Alternator w/Volvo
- Cockpit Lazarette Storage, 2 ea, Large
- 80 Gallon Fuel Tank, (one 33g, one 47g)
- Oversized Deck Trails 12" & 8"
- Marine Windshield w/Sliders & Glass Door, 5 Screens; Tempered Glass
- Raw Water Wash Down, w/SS Bib
- House Battery, 2 ea G27, Start Battery G27
- 1 Day Training/Walk Through Included
- 6 Automatic Hull Bilge Pumps, 1 ea. Compartment

GALLEY – SALON – HELM

- Dinette Seats 4, Sleeps 2 - 6'3" Length
- 1/4 Berth/Storage Under Galley, Large
- Bentleys Helm & Co-pilot Seats, Tips Up for Extra Counter Space, Premium
- 1ea, 15 lb. Propane Tank w/Enclosure, w/Auto Shut Off
- Teak & Holly Cabin Sole, Salon & Master, w/Dura Tech Finish
- Bonus Storage Under Dinette Table, Door 24"x18"
- Snap Curtains Master, Side & Overhead
- Seaward Propane Stove, Oven; Sealed Tank Assembly
- 4.2' Refrigerator NovaKool, Low Power Draw
- Polished SS/Acrylic Transom Door w/Latch
- 200 Watt Stereo High Output, w/6 Speakers, Jensen
- UV Protected Marine Upholstery

NAVIGATION

- Bow & Stern Thruster w/Joy Stick Control, Side Power
- Compass, 4" Richi
- US Coast Guard Running Lights, 2 mile LED 20,000 hr. Type

ACCOMMODATIONS – HEAD

- King Berth Sleeping Athwart Ship for Easy Access
- Clothes Hamper in Master Under Seat
- Marine Head w/Door, Sink, Shower, Portlight, 26 gal. Holding Tank
- Bookshelf Master fwd Bulkhead, Burmese Teak
- 12V Outlet, Master Stateroom & Dash
- Burmese Teak Cabinets & 3 Drawer Unit



DINETTE IN AFT STARBOARD QUARTER OF THE CABIN HAS STORAGE DRAWERS BELOW AND CONVERTS TO A BUNK WHEN NEEDED.

superstructure. Two “cornering” windows, with nearly 90-degree angles, eliminate traditional blind spots at the outer edges of the aft bulkhead. An angled and single piece forward cabin window is installed without multiple mullions to needlessly block the view and serviced by two huge windshield wipers. “We import that windshield from a manufacturer in Ireland,” said Larry. “Nobody makes anything like that in the US, but we find that it’s both super strong and provides better visibility.”

The main cabin is efficiently designed, providing enough room and amenities that some boaters who might believe they couldn’t cruise comfortably in anything as compact as a 28-foot boat should take a look at an Aspen C-90. Access to a quarter berth is immediately inside the aft bulkhead door, to port. The quarter berth comfortably sleeps a single adult, or can be used for additional stowage by a cruising couple. The galley is also on the port side, immediately forward of the quarter berth access. A deep and functional sink with single lever faucet, a dual voltage refrigerator freezer, and a propane range will facilitate cooking tasty meals aboard.

A dinette that will easily seat four (maybe six with some

kids in the mix) is in the aft starboard quarter of the main cabin. Stowage is available almost everywhere with a form or a fixture, and a series of drawers (rather than a less efficient single locker) is built into the aft portion of the dinette. Of course the dinette will convert to a bunk for kids or overnight guests, realistically sleeping two adults or perhaps three kids.

The helm is in the port forequarter of the main cabin. A port helm is slightly unusual, but certainly not unheard of, and in the Aspen C90 it is really the only logical location. The starboard forequarter of the main cabin allows access to the generously proportioned head and no less than enormous (at least king size) berth in the forward stateroom.

Fit? Finish? Furnishings? Fixtures? All appear to be first class on the Aspen C90.

UNDERWAY

The wind picked up as we rounded the end of the Elliott Bay Marina breakwater, as if some Greek god of the winds looked down and declared, “Aha! Here come some

folks without the good sense to stay in port! What fun I'll have, tossing them around like a cork!" The churning waves were an anemic green, and we noted large chunks of semi-submerged drift tumbling in the surge.

"We'll need to be careful not to hit any of that," remarked Larry. "Although there is a sand shoe protecting the prop and we probably could motor right over the top without any damage, it isn't an experiment I look forward to conducting."

We noticed an inbound Washington State ferry near Duwamish head, on the opposite side of Elliott Bay. "Let's run over and catch that ferry wake," suggested Larry. With the bay snotted up so badly, it seemed like an improbable idea. From the paradigm of a single hull trawler boater, these were 7-knot conditions at best and likely to produce an aggravating amount of bow slamming. We wouldn't be surprised to see a standard catamaran run pretty well in those same conditions, but as we throttled up and turned into the roiling mess we were immediately amazed.

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DINETTE IN BUNK MODE.

SPECIFICATIONS AND DIMENSIONS

| | |
|--------------|------------------------|
| LOA: 28' 2" | Displacement: 7,900 lb |
| Beam: 10' | Fuel: 80 gal |
| Draft: 2' 9" | Water: 48 gal |

Aspen Power Catamarans uses a patented Proa-Hull design to produce unheard of stability, fuel efficiency, and speed in an adventure cruiser. Aspen is the latest in innovation, safety, fuel economy, and green boating. Cruise with comfort and confidence

Built with Pride in the Pacific Northwest
28 · 32 · 36

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THE BERTH IN THE FORWARD STATEROOM IS ENORMOUS.

We could imagine how Alice must have felt after falling down that rabbit hole and winding up in Wonderland. Nothing seemed to be as we expected, (it was better!). At 2500 RM we were logging 12 miles per hour, while burning less than 3 gallons of diesel per hour. The ride was more than acceptable, given the conditions. Larry said, “We’re experiencing a slightly rougher ride than we need to. In most boats you slow down to improve the ride when the water is rough, but in this one you speed up instead.”

As our speed climbed over 15, over 16 and approached 18 mph, the ride got progressively smoother! Larry demonstrated how adjusting the trim tabs ever so slightly improved the running attitude, but with or without tabs we were slicing through four footers as if they were merely overachieving ripples. We kept a sharp eye out for drift, and it’s a good thing we did. We encountered a number of half submerged logs and branches on our sprint across Elliott Bay, and in every case the Aspen C90 responded quickly to the helm. It was like driving a seagoing sports car. At close to 20 mph, our fuel consumption was just over 6 gallons per hour. Top speed was about 23 miles

per hour, a pace that few boats would ever have considered attempting in those conditions but one which the Aspen C90 took with an easy stride. Fuel consumption was about 8.5 gallons per hour at wide open throttle.

We had no trouble closing in to the minimum permissible distance from the ferry, but despite our best efforts we never really identified the ferry wake. No matter, there was enough drama in the general sea state that a ferry wake would have more likely flattened things out just a bit.

The Greek god of the winds was frustrated, no doubt, by our sporty little craft’s ability to handle everything he could dish out that morning. We motored around the bay, taking the waves at a variety of angles. After this experience we have to rate every possible position in the waves somewhere between extremely good and superb. Even in these near ridiculous conditions, it was possible to run the boat without any hands on the wheel; the asymmetrical and dissimilar hulls, in combination, track absolutely straight at any speed.

We shifted into neutral and sat beam to the waves in the middle of the bay. A glance out the port window at the approaching walls of water inspired us to anticipate being heeled over rather severely by the beam seas. Once again, the monohull paradigm doesn't apply to catamarans in general and definitely not to the Aspen C90. The two hulls "stepped over" each wave, one after the other, and the amount of rolling proved to be a fraction of what one would reasonably anticipate. A sense of balance pervades every experience aboard the Aspen C90.

Motoring back to the marina, we realized that we had the opposite problem than is typically faced by boating writers after a sea trial. "You know Larry, these sea trials so often turn out to be conducted in almost dead flat water, and we have to sort of speculate how a boat will handle when conditions go south. Will we be safe to assure our readers that this boat will handle as well on a calm day, when sane people actually venture out, as it does in these miserable seas?"

Larry laughed, "Yes, you will be absolutely safe in doing so."

Coming from a boat builder and designer as renowned as Larry Graf, it's easy to find that assurance completely believable. How could anybody doubt the opinion of a man who has successfully re-invented the boat?

CONCLUSIONS

Anyone looking for a sturdy cruising boat around 28-feet (and a fair number of people who actually think they need something bigger) should take a close look at the Aspen Power Catamaran C90. This "green" boat delivers fabulous fuel economy (less than 2 gallon per hour at traditional trawler speeds), and can tackle some seriously grumpy conditions in comfort and in style.

The retail price of a new, well equipped, Aspen C90 is about \$198,000; a bargain that seems almost as impressive as the build and performance of the boat itself.

For additional information, please contact Aspen Power Catamarans at 360-608-4347 or visit www.aspenpower-catamarans.com.

Spring Boating Symposium March 15-17, 2013

- **Matt Rutherford**, just back last Spring from the first solo non-stop journey around the Americas.
- Two-time circumnavigator and award-winning author **Beth Leonard** presenting on heavy weather preparation & tactics.
- Radar & navigation classes on state-of-the art simulator with author of the definitive book on radar, **Kevin Monahan**.
- Storm Sailing, Reefing & Rigging with world renowned experts **Carol Hasse**, **Lisa Vizzini**, and **Brion Toss**.
- Preparing for offshore cruising with circumnavigators Matt, Beth, **Liza Copeland**, **Neil Sirman**, and sailor **Wendy Hinman**.
- Long-range cruising boats, including three that have circumnavigated, available for touring. Owners will be onboard.

Port Townsend, Washington

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